

Department of Land and Natural Resources

Sustainability Hotspot

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KAILUA PIER

~Big Island of Hawaii~



Top to bottom: The pier at Kailua-Kona, tourists on the cruise lines come ashore, the waterfront is a magnet for ocean recreation activities for tourists and residents alike, a short walk from the pier is Ahuena Heiau (shown) as well as Kamehameha's last residence and Hulihee Palace.

Kailua Pier, located in the heart of Kailua-Kona, is the focal point for activities in the urban area. The pier is used by commercial boat operators (fishing, sight-seeing, snorkeling and skin diving, submarines, parasailing, recreational boats, transient vessels, and much more). There are approximately 24 commercial permits issued to various commercial boat operators in this area.

Canoe clubs also use the pier for launching and retrieving their craft as well as a staging area for some of the largest regatta canoe races held in the State.

Some of the more prominent events held at the pier are the International Billfish Tournament, the Ironman Triathlon competition, the Kona Offshore Canoe Race, as well as many entertainment activities such as concerts and dances.

The Kailua Pier is also used by all cruise ships visiting the west side of the island. As many as 3,000 persons each day are shuttled from ships offshore to the pier where tourists are met and directed to various on-shore activities.

Built in 1955 by the State Department of Transportation's Harbors Division, the pier is 350 feet in length. A single-lane launch ramp is located on the north side of the pier. Nine berths with a water depth of 10 feet are occupied on the northern side of the pier. As there is no breakwater protecting this exposed facility, access is good and no channel is required to reach open water. The turning basin is 12 to 20-foot deep and 500-foot square.

Parking is limited and often congested as tour operators use the pier as a drop-off and pick-up zone for tourists who are shuttled in from the various hotels outside of Kailua-Kona.

Public parking is available on the pier between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. A parking guard regulates parking for the 12 hours parking is restricted and permits are required.

The marine resources in the immediate area have not been monitored and no baseline data is currently available. There appears to be a healthy marine ecosystem surrounding Kailua Pier. On-shore development has eliminated most plants with the exception of landscaping near the King Kamehameha Hotel.

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Top to bottom: just a few of the problems faced by DLNR at the Kailua Pier include overcrowding due to competing interests, excess trash that often ends up in the water, frequent lack of adequate parking, the threat of fuel spills and pollution from run-off.

Threats to the environment come from the possibility of:

- fuel spills from vessels anchored in the bay or at the pier;
- over-fishing;
- pollution from runoff.

There are no known endangered species or plants within the confines of the County park.

DLNR's Sustainability Team for the Kailua Pier:

Jeff Bearman - Boating and Ocean Recreation, Big Island, 329-4997;
Charles Nahele - Conservation and Resources Enforcement;
Charlene Unoki - Land Division;

is charged with the sustainability of the pier and resources in this area.

DLNR's Vision for the Future and How to Attain It

For the Kailua Pier to remain a viable facility for the many activities it supports, a commitment must be made by the Legislature to fund the structural repairs the pier desperately needs. Engineering studies performed since 1996 indicate that the pier's foundations are deteriorating to dangerous levels. An estimated \$3.5 million is needed for the retrofit.

The Department has created a new position for a full-time Harbor Agent to educate users, monitor, and enforce the many activities on the pier. This employee will have to establish a close working relationship with the Kailua Police Department to address the many enforcement problems that DLNR's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) cannot handle by itself.

A beautification project should be undertaken so that the pier is an aesthetically pleasing destination and that it fits in with the local architecture. Plants and trees that can withstand the rough winter weather should be planted. This should work in combination with an adequate lighting system that would be pleasing to the eye at night and provide safety and security for those on the pier after dark.

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Above: Improvements to the pier are badly needed to make it safer for the high number of users it sees on a daily basis.

Internally, DLNR must update Ocean Recreation Management Area (ORMA) rules to reflect current demands on the facility, monitor the health of aquatic resources, increase the enforcement presence and foster public awareness through education. 🌺



DLNR's Hotspot Team for the Kailua Pier (l-r): Bearman, Nahele, Unoki.